

## Cultural Centers Coalescing Through the Global Network University

### Richard Johnson Model Meets the Global Network University: A 2 point analysis, textual or material form and mode of reception

By: Sarah MK Ko, October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2010

It is an integral part of life to understand the media that we consume on a daily basis. One way of understanding media is by making sense of its messages. The voice of the media, or the messages, rather, is pervasive throughout: from a zingy status update on Facebook to a prime time TV show such as *Dancing with the Stars*, to government official-sponsored advertisements. All are available in print and online, whereby in the latter case, most of it is conveniently composed of the 'do it yourself' uploads, as user-generated content are seamlessly floating on the likes YouTube and *Vemo* to enhance both video-sharing and enlightening the audience with the partaking of a holistic experience. Online social media has culminated vastly with web-technology to further the empowerment through that message as one can shape, shake and move the outlooks starting with one individual and transforming all connected communities. We see it happening this very moment, while the tools are paramount for delivering that strong message to communicate a successful beginning of a global university network.

Within that scope, I will use a couple of the points in Richard Johnson's framework to demonstrate the cultural dynamics between the text and the mode of reception for the stellar launch of New York University's first foreign offshore campus. NYU spearheads the Global Network University. These key points from the Johnson model will be utilized to analyze the NYU student newspaper article titled, "NYU Abu Dhabi: the story from concept to classroom," available both in print and online<sup>1</sup>, together, with an audiovisual slideshow accompanying its news.

Washington Square News (WSN) has an obligation to endorse school functions and inform all prospective students, admitted students, and alumni, who may or may not have any interest in pursuing the experience at NYU Abu Dhabi (NYUAD), a new satellite campus, or towards another campus, in light of promoting study abroad programs. In so doing, their targeted audience is equally updated on much of the global network university's progress through this online newspaper. This newspaper article is marketed by WSN which is primarily affiliated with NYU, and it is also fitting to note that the staff writers are simply current students. New York Times does often complement most of what appears in the research overview, presented by WSN. Online viewers who have no affiliation with NYU may still regard WSN's coverage on the new campus as being informative—and detailed journalism to enlighten the institution's move on better equipping the global citizen.

Indeed, the article's coverage of the NYUAD is furnished to provide more than a glimpse; so, utilizing the web's tools and video technology, it can spur a professional, tour-like feel through the day in the life of Abu Dhabi as it blends with the school's mission venturing into a new home in a different region altogether. The female journalist, Jane C. Timm, narrates through select tantalizing visual images in this three minute and thirteen second-long audiovisual slideshow. The following analyzes from the beginning to the end of this slideshow.

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<sup>1</sup> NYU WSN article: <http://nyunews.com/newsfilter/?q=satellite#/news/2010/09/13/13abudhabi/?ref=ajax>  
(This article is from iHeartTeaching, <http://www.iheartteaching.com/6/post/2010/11/no-title.html>)

The first seven seconds into this slideshow presents a welcoming WSN convention, the WSN logo is incorporated, as always done prior to each of their online-streaming news, via their *NYUnews*, while syndicated on the YouTube channel. The implication for incorporating this WSN logo at the beginning of their news provides a visual cue that the following story is produced by this news organization; merely, a proud display of their name. Regular viewers may associate this name to the dedicated team of literate NYU students bringing true and honest information about the current news pertaining to the university that evolves around—and, caters especially to—them.

The next visual slide captures an immaculate interior space in which the viewer can see the back views of two females wearing their traditional black dresses, shown walking toward the end of the white hall—the effect is to graphically present an element of difference, that culturally, these women in Abu Dhabi can proudly present themselves, such that there will not be room for surprises. This particular visual perspective draws the viewer's eyes to the center, where the female figures are dressed in black (since the surrounding color is mainly white) to the end of the hall. The title, “Washington Square News Inside Abu Dhabi by Jane C. Timm,”<sup>2</sup> is placed in the foreground.

Shortly after, thirteen seconds into this presentation, a map of United Arab Emirates (UAE) is blown up, and the viewer can read both in English and Arabic the names of the cities of UAE. As this map is further zoomed-in, Jane immediately states the statistical information of Abu Dhabi. For example, directly quoting Jane's first few sentences:

“United Arab Emirates population [is] 4.5 million. Here's Abu Dhabi. It is the largest and wealthiest of the seven Emirates that make up the UAE. The New York Times reported that Abu Dhabi has 0.2% percent of the world's population, but 9% of the world's oil.”

The effect of stating a slew of statistics is to reinforce NYU's safe and feasible decision to build a satellite campus in Abu Dhabi. Abu Dhabi is not the obvious popular metropolitan city any average person living in a western country would immediately think of, because for one, not many Westerners talk about a planned vacation to the Abu Dhabi or UAE for that matter, due to inherent risks, as well as, due to speculations during the recent debt crisis the country faced.

In terms of metonymy, NYU is associated with its metropolitan prestige. Hence, with the cosmopolitan feel of NYC, that is universal to everyone, which also dynamically converges with the

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Washington Square News, WSN, is one and same as NYU News:

<http://www.nyu.edu/global/the-global-network-university.html>

<http://nyunews.com/newsfilter/?q=nyu+paris#/blogs/?ref=ajax>

<http://nyunews.com/opinion/2010/09/19/20house/>

<http://nyunews.com/newsfilter/?q=satellite#/news/2010/09/13/13abudhabi/?ref=ajax>

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select sophisticated values of all cultures worldwide, Abu Dhabi shares that sentiment. NYU is in short, synonymous to NYC. So now, it is Abu Dhabi's turn to carry NYU's torch. How much more fitting is this when at the middle of the clip you see a citadel shining bright in the night sky?

Overall, Abu Dhabi's wealth from its oil reserves, new dynamics and attitude it wishes to portray—in a grandiose makeover—without jettisoning, but better yet espousing, past traditional iconic symbols (both religious and cultural, as shown in the rugs, furniture and such overtones found in architecture), all combine to showcase the consummate cultural city. NYU can only makes bridges and marry the new, triumphant modern visage of the deserts. The antiquity and modern charisma of Abu Dhabi are ripe for the global-minded student.

The following slideshows depict a close-up of the exterior of NYUAD's temporary building, where the semiotics of power and governance are prevalent in the NYU logo. In addition, NYUAD is written in both Arabic and English. These semiotics of power and governance verify authenticity of this NYUAD satellite campus building. This semiotics of power indirectly facilitates for a brave, new decision administrators had grappled with and executed-well, regarding the placement of a satellite campus outside of NYC, albeit there could had been a host of other well-known urban centers—but after all, we cannot dismiss that this part of UAE is apparently an inveterate force for economic prosperity, while further recognized as a social (attached to luxury) and political strong-house in the world.

The next few visual slides convey the luxurious and modern dormitories the incoming NYUAD's students, faculty and staff will call home. Their residence will be comprised of the 16 floors out of the 46-story Suma Tower. One of the slides captures a view from one of the dorms which are akin to a perspective peering from the Rogers Centre and Air Canada Centre (in the direction of the Canadian National Exhibition, nested in the downtown core of Toronto).

This place has already adopted a sophisticated and luxurious glamor—or city slickin' GLAM, rather—in its posh and urban landscape with the Emirates Palace Hotel, a three billion dollar project dovetailing the meaning of extravagance in a whole new palatial block, which requires at a minimum, ten staff members, for example, to maintain their *Swarovski* crystal chandeliers, as well as, their iconic, grand mosque made for the capacity of seven thousand worshippers.

The pictures are taken on a sunny day and, by night, with its exterior lights illuminating a magical glow, which convincingly show the city to be peaceful and quiet due to a few visible pedestrians. Many of the pictures show the exterior and interior designs of the monolithic buildings and skyscrapers. There are no images portraying the busy rush hour in the metro, the congested highways, or the local farmers market to list a few obvious pictures that would have surfaced if it were in Shanghai, Seoul, NYC, Toronto, or Montreal (McGill's shopping core, anyone?).

The next segment of pictures focuses on the permanent NYUAD's campus on Saadiyat Island. Saadiyat Island will be the future home to NYUAD's permanent satellite campus<sup>3</sup>. This island will be the world's new cultural nexus with plans to create Guggenheim and the Louvre satellite museums.

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<sup>3</sup> NYU's proposed and eventual completion of the Saadiyat Island location, at Abu Dhabi: <http://nyunews.com/news/2010/02/22/22housing/>

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The meaning of Saadiyat Island<sup>4</sup> will serve a double meaning as the island of happiness in Arabic.

Below this audiovisual slideshow, there is an NYU advertisement space. Online advertisements generated by NYU's clever marketing teams are played as flash animations where the catchy slogan begins as "NYU." followed by a name of a region (ie, Paris) then ending in a succinct phrase, "Be there." An example would be "NYU. London. Be there." and the Flash graphics introduce other cities (see screenshot below).



It is a bold statement: NYU is effective and simple with online media advertisements.

These advertisements are effective because NYU has already a worldly reputation as a leading university in the country and in the world, and therefore, it does not appear to be pretentious for John Sexton, NYU's president, to coin the "theory of

the global network university," in which this new theory encompasses NYU furnishing its bond with its other subordinate entities, ie., study abroad programs, other Washington Square campuses, and satellite campuses.

With the changing face of NYU, current students in HQ, Washington Square Campus, and other campuses are recommended for internal exchanges to study abroad at least for a semester in any of the five continents, as there is bound to be an NYU study abroad program or campus available in that continent. It is also strategically done, to place NYU crown in each of the five continents to serve as a true example of global network university.

This case of NYU Abu Dhabi's campus development is a successful concept that has been entrepreneurial in today's social media's tactics. The popularity to gain admissions in offshore

campuses was largely due to the Facebook Fan Pages, Twitter and the making of new websites. (On a side note: there is a slight difference with Facebook Fan Page (739 fans) as it allows for the creator to control and gather



[/2010/11/no-title.html](http://2010/11/no-title.html)

outsiders.) On this this online newspaper article, there are 642 Facebook users, who like the WSN Facebook Fan Page (see below for example of a NYU Abu Dhabi Facebook Fan Page screenshot).

Hence, it is available to all Facebook users to indicate their liking of such Fan Page. The promotion didn't stop there. Blogs were filled with new mesmerizing stories to tantalize the youth to consider enrolling there. The public inquiries, mostly from prospect students before officially registering in Abu Dhabi, were well-received and answered in sequence, via direct e-mails and web-based forums.

New York City's physical bulletins are pampered with NYU's advertisements regarding the Global Network University, or through the study abroad messages.

The New York Times<sup>5</sup> has reported well in favor of NYU's dealings in recent times and past few years regarding its journey to lead the global network university at the helm.

Using the two key points, text and mode of reception, from Johnson's model reveals the impact of packaging an audiovisual slideshow, newspaper article, and WSN's Facebook Fan Page, NYU's Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and alike, these social network sites exemplify and transcend their semiotics of power and governance of NYU's torch and name beyond physical existence—virtually, while promoting and maintaining its crown establishments in each of the five continents across the globe.

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<sup>5</sup> NY Times article:  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/02/nyregion/02nyu.html?ref=new\\_york\\_university](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/02/nyregion/02nyu.html?ref=new_york_university)  
Another example:  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/31/nyregion/31nyu.html?ref=new\\_york\\_university](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/31/nyregion/31nyu.html?ref=new_york_university)

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